

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 2nd June 2020

2052

1 of 10

Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 2nd June 2020 virtually via Zoom video conferencing system.

Present: Councillors L Ashley (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), J Carney, A Charrier, A Gowler, W Haggata, A Hay, P Murphy, F Newell, J Smith and I Taylor.

21) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Cllr Petrou sent apologies for absence.

22) Declarations of Interest and Dispensations to Speak and Vote on Declarable Pecuniary Interest Items

Cllrs Benney, Hay and Murphy declared an interest in all planning matters as members of FDC's planning committee.

23) Open Forum

No members of the public had requested access to the meeting and it was, therefore, agreed to go on to the next item on the agenda.

24) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was agreed the Mayor should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2020 as a correct record.

25) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 18) Connections Bus: Project Manager of the Connections Bus, Mr Alan Webb, had agreed to add Chatteris to the "villages we visit page" of the Project's website and said when the sessions were promoted mention would be made of the Council's financial support. The visits to Chatteris had not been promoted as there were already good numbers attending, then lockdown started. Mr Webb also asked if the Council would be interested in funding courses, delivered either by video conferencing or socially distanced, or detached youth work. Members agreed to wait until September when it was hoped the Connections Bus would be able to open again.

Min 16) Church Grounds: FDC's Leisure and Open Spaces Contract Manager had responded to the Town Council's letter of complaint about the digging up of the grassed area at the rear of the church so a wildflower meadow could be planted again. The Manager claimed the area was a shambles when he took it over and he made several mentions of costs to FDC. He said a wildflower meadow was more environmentally sustainable but both the Church and the

Town Council had complained about the idea as “both have, apparently, received complaints from members of the public”. The area had now been re-seeded with standard grass seed and the Manager pointed out FDC had spent a considerable sum making the church grounds more acceptable, including the installation of wooden and drop bollards and improvements to the flower borders. The Clerk said her letter had pointed out that the grass area had looked at its best at the beginning of the season and a previous attempt at a wildflower meadow in the area had resulted in a patch which always looked a mess and was a harbour for anti-social behaviour. Some Councillors were upset by the tone of the letter and did not feel the response was proportionate to the original letter. The letter mentioned the requirement to get permission from the Church to carry out works and Cllr Haggata asked about those requirements. Cllr Murphy explained that ideas had to go to the PCC and then the Diocese Board.

Cllr Murphy said there was now wrangling about the positioning of the RAF memorial stone with the Diocese currently agreeing the stone could be located in the Church grounds but not the explanatory board. The Clerk said she had suggested meeting with Diocese representatives on site (when this was possible) to discuss the way forward and showing them the interpretation board. Major Norman Larke, who was leading the project agreed this was the best way forward.

Cllr Smith commented that the churchyard at the front of the church looked wonderful and the FDC works had transformed what was an eyesore.

Min 12) Public Space Protection Order. The Clerk had asked for clarification on why the Public Space Protection Order did not cover Wenny and Furrowfields recreation grounds. Mrs Layna Warren had explained that they were included in the Order and were listed for banning dogs in the gated play areas only. The wider open spaces were included in the district wide ‘Must remove fouling’ and ‘To be placed on leads when requested by an authorised officer’ orders. Dogs were allowed off leads in these areas.

Min 2) Press Release: The Clerk had written a press release on the Town Council electing its Mayor virtually, via Zoom, for the first time in history.

Min 17) Double Yellow Lines: Cllr Hay said she had met (on line) with officers from the County Council to discuss the TROs for Boadicea Court and Huntingdon Road. The Boadicea Court order had been agreed but the report for Huntingdon Road was not very clear about where lines would be removed or added. The County Council was attempting to contact the Highways officer responsible for the order (who was on secondment) and in the meantime the Clerk had sent through the information she had received about the order. Cllr Hay was hopeful the matter would be resolved that week.

26) Police Matters

Members had received the following report based on information received from the police in the past month:

Local Police

No report has been received from Sgt Lugg.

Neighbourhood Alerts

5/5/20: Warning about shed break-ins and thefts at Whittlesey allotments.

May 2020 & 1/6/20: Regular updates from PCSO Dawn Rae on Covid 19 patrols. On 15th March there were no breaches of the new guidelines; on 16th May youths were warned they must stay 2m apart; on the 17th youngsters were reminded skateparks were out of action; on the 21st families were abiding by social distancing rules in parks and on the 27th families were advised that children from different families could not play together and the officers noted that FDC had put up better signage about the closure of play and skate parks. On the 1st June queues were short at supermarkets and pharmacies with everyone observing social distancing and recycling centres were well organised.

23/5/20: Notification that more than 100 people had been arrested for the production or supply of drugs in Cambridgeshire over the past 8 weeks. Cannabis factories had also been dismantled.

27/5/20: Neighbourhood Watch June 'Our News' e-newsletter.

28/5/20: Notification that with more people taking to the web during the pandemic, the chance of falling victim to online fraudsters was increasing so police were sharing advice to help keep the public safe online. Throughout January, February and March 2020 the national Action Fraud and Cyber Crime reporting centre received more than 65,000 calls.

The report was noted.

27) FDC, Street Scene, CCTV & Section 106 Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest updates (**copy attached**). The updates were noted.

28) Financial Officers Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 26th May 2020 showing expenditure of £19,155.03 and income of £75,670.00 (including a half year's precept income) compared with budgets, along with a bank reconciliation statement and a summary statement of reserves and funds balances.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and approved.

29) Internal Auditors Report 2019/20

Members had before them copies of the Internal Auditor's Report and his signed certificate of the Annual Return for the year end 31st March 2020. Members noted that the Auditor had no issues that he wished to draw to the attention of the Council.

The Financial Officer advised Members that all relevant documents were ready to go to the External Auditor on Members approval of the Internal Audit. She also advised that the un-audited accounts would be on public display on the Town Council's website, the Town's noticeboard and the Town Council Offices window.

The Financial Officer confirmed that the Annual Governance & Accountability Return along with the final accounts had been completed well within the timescales set under the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Internal Auditor's report for the year 01st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 be noted and approved.

30) Re-investment of Council Assets

Lloyds One Year Fixed Term Deposit Maturity.

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Lloyds Bank (£85,000 at 1.25%) matured on the 11th June 2020. Lloyds had confirmed the new reinvestment interest rate for a fixed 12 months term was 0.3%.

Nationwide Building Society Business 1 Year Fixed Rate Saver Maturity

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Nationwide Building Society (£85,764.51 at 1.10%) matured on the 18th June 2020. Nationwide had confirmed a new reinvestment interest rate for a 1-year fixed term was 0.40%.

Whilst there were no short-term plans for use of the £170,764.51, the Financial Officer advised any reinvestment for a period longer than a year would be inadvisable in the current financial climate and with a reduction in current rates of interest there was little to be gained by increasing the Council's total investment. The Reserve Accounts held balances of £142,932, the AWP and other holding accounts held balances of £71,283 amounting to £214,215 in total.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she had spent time comparing interest rates of similar, safe, fixed term savings accounts and confirmed that the roll over rates quoted from Nationwide & Lloyds were competitive rates in the current climate and recommended a roll over reinvestment of £85,000 at 0.40% with Nationwide and £85,000 at 0.30% with Lloyds, both fixed for 1 year. The Nationwide interest element of the investment to be drawn down into the Barclays Premium account.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and approved.

31) Payment of Accounts

It was **RESOLVED** that the payment of the following accounts be noted and approved: -

Financial Officer	Payroll June 2020	1,067.68
Clerk	Payroll June 2020	1,546.57
Pension Fund	Payroll June 2020	878.67
HMRC	Payroll June 2020	609.00
Zen Internet	Website Jun- July2020	10.79
Mark Saunders	Internal Audit	300.00
R J Warren	Gardening Services & additional cuts	857.10
Onecom	May phone bill	78.88
Wave	RHS of Honeysome Rd Allotments	31.05
Clerk	Reim re: Zoom Monthly subscription, memory stick and headphones	49.11
Ethos Inc Walters	Photocopies over contract	9.53
A Simpson	Allotment Tap repair	15.00
C A Chubbock	Annual Allotment Rent	275.00
Viking	Stationary order	124.98
Total		5,853.36

32) Town Sign

Members had received a report about the Town Sign from the Clerk:

Introduction

The Clerk reported the Town Sign which located at Jubilee Gardens was splitting apart and the artist who refurbished it in 2014 had agreed that the situation was now terminal and the sign was beyond repair. The purpose of the report was to outline the history of the sign and to seek members support for the Clerk to commission a new sign.

Background

In January 2014 members received a report from the Clerk about the history of the Town Sign which included information that the first sign was installed by the Women's Institute in 1977 to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee. The sign was replaced in 2002. The replacement sign was subsequently refurbished by Mr Richard Savage, of Savage Art, in April 2014.

Currently

With the current sign beyond repair, Mr Savage had indicated he was happy to paint another sign and once again had very kindly agreed only to charge for the materials. The main expense, therefore, would be the wood for the sign.

Decision

Members agreed to take up Mr Savage's kind offer to create a new town sign and agreed the Clerk should source the wood.

33) Trees Survey

Members had received the following report from the Clerk:

'In May 2017 the CGM group carried out a survey of all the trees on land owned by Chatteris Town Council and made recommendations on work which should be undertaken. The cost of the survey was £264.

The work was carried out in the autumn by AC Tree Surgery of Littleport after they put in the most competitive quote. The cost was £2,310.

For insurance purposes it is recommended that trees are inspected every three years and a new survey is therefore due.

The Council's gardening contractors R J Warren have confirmed they are not qualified to carry out a tree survey but they are qualified to carry out any tree works recommended by a survey. They also have a company who carry out surveys on their behalf.

If Councillors agree that a tree survey should be commissioned members are asked to decide if they wish the CGM Group or a company recommended by R J Warren to carry out that survey.

Other Tree News

The original tree survey noted that the two Willow trees on the approach road to the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park were in need of attention.

At the time it was believed the trees belonged to the County Council. After the Clerk contacted them on a few occasions about the state of the trees, including earlier this year, the Council finally replied stating they believed the trees belonged to Anglian Water.

The Clerk then contacted Anglian Water who agreed to investigate if they owned the trees. A few months on the Clerk went back to Anglian Water because she believed the trees were now in a dangerous state. At the timing of writing this report Anglian Water have yet to reply to the concerns.

In the recent high winds branches fell from the tree, fortunately on to farmland and not on to the road, and there is a large branch hanging down over the road. The Clerk fears this will fall in the next high wind and is worried it could fall either on to people walking beneath the tree or on to a vehicle.

With the park now so popular the Clerk feels the Council has a duty of care to the park users and, in consultation with the Mayor and the Financial Officer, took the decision to ask R J Warren's for a quote to remove the hanging branch.

Councillors are now asked to consider if they are prepared to pay for the works to the tree, if Anglian Water fail to respond, to ensure the safety of people using the park.'

Cllr Hay requested the Clerk obtain two quotations for the tree survey. This was **agreed**.

Regarding the trees near the Pocket Park, the Mayor said she believed the Council should write to Anglian water pointing out the trees are a danger to the public and asking them to carry out the works or the Council would commission the work and would send the bill to Anglian Water.

Members agreed if the trees were unsafe they needed to come down for the safety of the public. Cllr Smith suggested giving Anglian Water seven days to respond, pointing out the Town Council were not accepting liability for the trees but were commissioning the work in the interests of public safety. The work to be carried out at the best quote and to be charged back to Anglian Water. In the meantime the Council should obtain quotes for the work.

When the work was complete Cllr Carney suggested putting a notice on Facebook stating the Town Council took decisive action.

34) To Agree Dates for Meetings for Coming Year

Members agreed that if meetings were able to take place face to face they would be held in the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris, unless otherwise agreed in advance.

If face to face meetings were not possible, meetings would take place virtually using the Zoom conferencing system. All meetings would begin at 7pm.

Full Council meetings would be held on the following dates:

Tuesdays 2nd June 2020, 7th July, 4th August, 1st September, 6th October, 3rd November, 1st December, 5th January 2021, 2nd February, 2nd March and 6th April.

35) Planning

Councillors considered planning applications a) to g) (as shown on the appended list). It was agreed to forward the following comments to Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council:

- a) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- b) Support
- c) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- d) Support
- e) Support

- f) Support
- g) Support

The Clerk reminded members that the planning application for the Womb Farm development was due to be determined by Fenland District Council's planning committee the following day with a recommendation to approve.

The Town Council was not opposed to the plan but had said the issue of free flowing traffic and access on to the A141 needed to be resolved before the Town Council would support the application. Traffic lights at Slade End roundabout were a necessity and the proposed footway from Doddington Road to the Jack's site along Fenland Way should also be a cycleway.

Cllr Gowler said he would be speaking on the application at the FDC planning meeting on behalf of the Town Council and he asked if there were any points members wished him to raise. He had drafted a speech which he had to submit in case his internet connection failed. Cllr Gowler said he was proposing to say that in general the Town Council felt it was a good development but they were a little disappointed the proposed extension of the cycleway might not be the full width sought. However the main concern was the access on to the A141 especially as Highways said there was no evidence of congestion and the development would not severely impact on the road. Members pointed out those surveying the traffic had obviously not observed the road at the beginning and end of the working day when traffic was often backed up the length of Fenland Way. Cllr Gowler was convinced if part of the development was accessed from the A141, rather than Doddington Road, it would have a disastrous impact on an already congested road. The report to FDC's planning committee made no mention of traffic lights or any other proposals to improve the Slade End roundabout.

36) Growing Fenland Update

An email had been received confirming that the Growing Fenland report for Chatteris had been approved by Fenland District Council's Cabinet, Cambridgeshire County Council's Communities and Partnership Committee and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board. The Growing Fenland Overarching Strategic report was also noted by all three committees.

A funding pot had been ring-fenced for projects and each town was now asked to bid for funding by producing a business case for relevant projects outlined in their town masterplan.

Virtual meetings were being organised so each Town Team could discuss the final report and look to prioritise the actions in the report. In some cases there might be an overlap and the potential for a district-wide bid for any of the priorities.

The Clerk said dates for such a meeting had been proposed and it would be held within the next two weeks.

37) Review of Volunteer Policy

The Clerk informed members that the Council's Volunteer Policy was now three years old and should be reviewed. Since the policy was adopted in April 2017 GDPR had been introduced and it was necessary to include reference to GDPR in the policy.

It was, therefore, agreed the following wording should be included under the heading 'Attracting volunteers and volunteer agreement':

'All information you provide will be retained by the Town Council in compliance with its GDPR Policy and will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.'

In addition it was agreed instead of Access NI Checks the paragraph should read:

'Access DBS Checks. Some volunteer roles will require a DBS check to inform Chatteris Town Council of any criminal convictions that a person wishing to volunteer may have. Any volunteer position which involves regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults will be subject to an enhanced DBS check.'

38) High Street Drains

The Clerk reported Cllr Smith had suggested it might be a good time to ask Anglian Water to jet clean the drains in the High Street again as the High Street was quiet with relatively little traffic and the drains were beginning to smell. Anglian Water had agreed to the request and had promised to undertake the work by June 5th.

39) Traffic Issues

Planned Roadworks: Confirmation had been received that the application for a Temporary Traffic Order to close London Road from 14th to 25th September from 9am to 5pm had been approved. The Highways officer had confirmed that home owners' access would be maintained but all other road users would have to use a diversion route.

A resident of Rosemary Lane had queried a temporary prohibition of use order to close the Lane from 15th to 29th June for resurfacing works. The resident had said no vehicular access could be problematic. The query had been passed to Highways. Councillors queried why so many vehicles now used what used to be a footpath. Cllr Gowler explained a bollard at the Station Street end of the lane was now permanently down allowing access. Councillors agreed works to the lane were urgently needed and were concerned that any repairs might be ruined by vehicles.

The Clerk had reported several large potholes in Honeysome Road and as a result repairs were planned.

LHI: The Clerk reported she had submitted the LHI application and district councillor Daniel Divine had given his backing for the application. The window for applications was currently still open.

Buses: Notification had been received of a phased step-up of bus services in Cambridgeshire due to the changes in lockdown rules.

Roadworks: Lists of the latest roadworks and events had been received as had the IHMC incident report for April 2020.

40) Correspondence

Members had before them a list of correspondence received since the last meeting (**copy attached**).

Memorial Request: Councillors considered the request for permission to plant a tree and install a bench in memory of the Postmaster's wife Ramila. Members agreed a memorial tree could be planted in the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park, if the person making the request completed a Memorial Tree Agreement. They were unsure about a bench pointing out there was no suitable location in the High Street and Cllr Smith said the idea of the Pocket Park was to create a natural environment with no formal benches. There was also the question of who would maintain the bench. Cllr Carney suggested the bench could be installed along the Old Railway Line Footpath and Cllr Benney said if this was the case the Council should request a bond to cover ongoing maintenance costs with a caveat that if the bench became a nuisance it would be taken out. The Clerk agreed to put the suggestions to the request's author and to inform him that if he did wish to install a bench in the town he would need to contact Fenland District Council for permission.

41) Reports

Wenny Recreation Ground: Cllr Haggata said he had been approached by a local resident regarding the cycleway around Wenny Recreation Ground. She asked if cycling could be banned in accordance with the sign at the entrance to the recreation ground which prohibited cycling. Cllr Haggata pointed out the path was a designated cycleway and asked if the sign at the entrance could be changed. Cllr Murphy agreed to look into the matter.

Defibrillator: Cllr Carney said he had been approached by the organiser of defibrillators for Chatteris asking when the Council's defibrillator was going up and suggesting it could be positioned near the Pocket Park. Cllr Carney pointed out there was no electricity supply near the Pocket Park. The Financial Officer said she had received an email from the organiser. As Cllr Benney had kindly agreed to erect the defibrillator on the wall of the Apple Green garage at Slade End, she had asked him to contact the organiser directly and arrange collection of the defibrillator. Cllr Benny promised to ring the organiser the following day.

Old Railway Line: Cllr Gowler said he had mentioned on Facebook that the catch for the gate at the entrance to the Old Railway Line Footpath and Bridleway was broken but he had been to inspect it and it was now fixed. The Clerk said she had inspected the catch and had then spoken to Mr Ben Baker, who installed the gate and fencing, and he had kindly agreed to repair it free of charge if a repair was possible. Mr Baker had warned the gate was now nearly 20 years old.

42) Items for the next Agenda: No items were put forward for the next agenda.

